The Devil has your Number

Posted originally on the Archive of Our Own at http://archiveofourown.org/works/15803400.

Rating:	Mature
Archive Warning:	No Archive Warnings Apply
Category:	M/M
Fandom:	Hannibal (TV)
Relationship:	Will Graham/Hannibal Lecter
Characters:	Will Graham, Hannibal Lecter, Franklyn Froideveaux, Tobias Budge, Jack Crawford, Alana Bloom
Additional Tags:	being courted by the devil is hard work, Hannibal Loves Will, he just wants to be with him for eternity, nothing wrong with that, lol, some stuff from canon had to change because Will doesn't have his brain on fire in this, Franklyn is weird, i have no idea how to write clever banter, but that won't stop me from trying, Hospitals, Murder, just one kiss between will/alana like in canon, season 1 episode 8 "fromage"
Language:	English
Series:	Part 3 of The Devil Wants His Due
Stats:	Published: 2018-08-26 Words: 7,200 Chapters: 1/1

The Devil has your Number

by SingingInTheRaiin

Summary

Will Graham just can't catch a break. Every time he thinks he finally understands Hannibal, something else happens to make him realize that he doesn't. Now there's someone turning people into instruments, and Will has to find them, even while he has other things on his mind. Things like maybe it wouldn't be the worst thing in the world to try and get to know Hannibal a little better...

Will watched silently as Hannibal washed the blood off of his hands. Not in the metaphorical sense, since he doubted that the devil himself would ever be able to wash all that blood off of his hands, but in the literal sense, because Hannibal had been elbows deep in a man's insides very recently. And not even to kill him, surprisingly, but to save his life. Will wondered if it was possible that Hannibal would ever stop surprising him. Not that he'd ever ask such a thing out loud. He was already at such a disadvantage against Hannibal.

When the faucet was finally shut off, the sudden absence of the white noise of running water felt strange, and Hannibal was giving Will a curious look. "Are you alright? You look rather upset despite the fact that I did as you asked, and saved that man's life."

Will hadn't been aware that he looked upset, but he figured that it was just a side effect of being in Hannibal's presence. Who wouldn't look upset when they knew exactly who they were dealing with? "I'm not upset," he told Hannibal softly. "Just lost in thought. I'm surprised that you're not more upset, actually. Jack and the others seemed pretty certain that Silverstri was the Ripper. Usually you get more angry when someone else takes credit for your work."

Hannibal let out a loud laugh. "Will, you know who I am. According to some, I'm directly responsible for all death on Earth. If I wasn't willing to share a little credit every now and then, I'd be left in an angry rampage all the time."

Will furrowed his eyebrows, feeling lost. Not that this was the first time he'd felt such a thing when it came to Hannibal. "Then why did you get so upset about Abel Gideon?"

Hannibal shrugged. "We all have bad days." Will just nodded silently, not really sure what to say to that. He turned to walk out of Hannibal's kitchen, but then felt a hand gently grabbing his arm a moment later, despite having not heard any footsteps coming towards him. "And where are you off to?"

Will blinked a few times as he glanced back at Hannibal. "Home? I only came here to- I don't even know why I came here. But I do need to get home. Some of us are mere humans who actually need to sleep on occasion. And I would hate myself if I neglected my dogs."

Hannibal narrowed his eyes. "I do constantly waver back and forth between the idea of someday giving you as many dogs as you could want in order to make you happy, and not giving you any at all so that you won't have time to focus your attention on anyone other than me."

Unfortunately, Will couldn't hide the way his whole body shivered at the words, though he wasn't even sure why he reacted at all. "I'm not going to be your consort," he muttered. "I've got better things to do with my time. I plan on dying someday when I'm old and gray, and then never seeing you again."

Hannibal laughed, and there was a light look on his face, but his grip on Will's arm tightened just a bit. "Why Will, it almost sounds like you're trying to hurt my feelings," he said in a playful tone.

Will shrugged with one shoulder. “Can I go now? I’ve got a microwave dinner just screaming my name right now.”

Hannibal shuddered at the horror of such a thought, and pulled Will even closer to himself. “It would be cruel of me to subject you to such a thing. Why don’t you stay for dinner? I could make something just for you, and of course, you could watch the entire production.”

Will tilted his head and hummed softly under his breath as if he was actually thinking about it, and then he leaned even closer to Hannibal. The tips of their noses were practically touching, and Will spoke in a breathy voice, like the kind that seemed popular in the movies lately. “Why Hannibal, it is so kind of you to invite me for dinner.” He moved even closer, and their lips were just centimeters apart, and he could tell that Hannibal was holding his breath, probably waiting for Will to kiss him. “But I’m afraid I have other plans,” Will said as he pulled away from Hannibal and practically danced out of the kitchen. He could feel Hannibal’s eyes on him as he left, but was able to refrain from looking back, and ended up driving back to Wolf Trap without any troubles. His dogs were as excited to see him as always, and Will was glad to play with them. He couldn’t imagine not having them in his life, and there’s no way he’d let Hannibal make him live dog-free. Not that he’d ever become Hannibal’s consort, of course, so it didn’t matter anyways.

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When Hannibal invited him to the opera, Will couldn’t stop himself from openly showing his exasperation. “Do I look like the kind of guy who would want to go to an opera?”

Hannibal didn’t even try to hide the way his eyes ran up and down Will’s body in an assessing manner. Then he shook his head. “Not in those clothes. But I would be very happy to dress you up more fittingly for the occasion. I’m sure you would look absolutely divine in a tuxedo.”

Will wrinkled his nose at the thought of being stuck in stiff clothes for an entire evening, and having to socialize with the sort of people who enjoyed going to operas. It was definitely not his idea of a good time. “Thanks for the offer, really, but no thanks.”

He internally cursed the way Hannibal could look at him with so much disappointment that it made Will feel guilty even though he’d done nothing wrong. “You did promise you would give me a chance to prove my worth to you,” he reminded Will, as if Will could possibly forget about any conversation he ever shared with this madman.

But Will refused to let himself be guilt tripped. “If you really wanted to prove my worth, you’d do it by offering me things that I actually like. Have fun at the opera, Hannibal.” He made sure that one of his most stubborn expressions were showing so that Hannibal wouldn’t think he had any chance of changing Will’s mind.

Luckily, Hannibal seemed to actually get the memo for once in his goddamn life, because he nodded once. “I understand.” With that, he turned and left, and Will could hear the sound of his front door closing a minute later. He let out a yawn, and wondered why Hannibal had thought that inviting Will to the opera at one-thirty in the morning would actually yield any positive results.

When Will was called to the opera house a few days later, he couldn't help thinking that this really wasn't surprising at all. Of course he knew that Hannibal would never be foolish enough to shit where he eats, so to speak, but regardless, death had a way of following Hannibal around, and it was starting to get a little annoying. He took a moment to think about the last time he'd directed Hannibal's towards a victim, and realized that it had already been a few weeks. He still wasn't sure if Hannibal actually *needed* to kill people, but either way, it had been too long, and he didn't want to test Hannibal too much. At least not when it came to potentially putting innocent lives on the line.

It was a little bit unnerving to see a man who'd been made into an instrument, and it definitely didn't escape his attention that Hannibal was watching him with gleaming eyes. It was obvious that Hannibal knew something Will didn't, but Will wasn't going to sink so low as to actually ask for help. He'd found plenty of murderers on his own, and this one wasn't going to be any different.

Jack definitely seemed concerned by the idea of one serial killer trying to attract the attention of another. There was already so much on the poor man's plate without having to deal with some kind of killer team up. As they left the opera house, Will lagged behind so that he could grab Hannibal's coat sleeve as soon as the man emerged from the building, and tugged him away to somewhere they wouldn't be overheard. "This was for you." It wasn't a question. He already knew that he was right. "Are you going to try and respond?"

Hannibal blinked once, then tilted his head, giving Will one of his usual 'I'm-so-proud-that-you're-so-smart' smiles. "If I was, you'd be the first to know, since you would need to give me the name of my next pig. But I'm not quite sure that I want to respond. I've already found the perfect man, so what more could I possibly want?"

Will could feel his cheeks heating up, and he cleared his throat as he looked away, knowing that Hannibal would've already noticed his embarrassment. "Uh, right. Okay. Just let me know if you think of anything that might be necessary to the case."

"Of course." Will didn't really like the look of amusement in Hannibal's eyes, but decided that there was nothing he could really do about it, at least not at the moment. Will nodded once, and turned to head back to his car so he could head to the lab and see if anything important came up on the body. He wasn't physically grabbed, but somehow the sound of Hannibal calling out to him was enough to make Will stop in his tracks. "Will. I do not know how to fish."

Of the many things Will imagined Hannibal might say to him at any given moment, that wasn't even close to being one of them. He turned back to give Hannibal a look of confusion. "Okay…?"

And that's when Will got the pleasure of seeing Hannibal look even slightly uncomfortable. Most people probably wouldn't even notice a difference in his usual facade, but Will studied Hannibal's face often enough to spot it whenever something changed. "I don't know how to fish," Hannibal repeated, and it felt like he was somehow working up to something. "But you do." He paused for a moment to give Will a meaningful look.

Will wasn't an idiot. He was pretty sure that for some bizarre reason, Hannibal was asking Will to teach him how to fish. It seemed strange to think that the devil wouldn't already know such a thing, but maybe it had never come up in the past several million years, or however long Hannibal had been around. But Will was enjoying this moment too much to just make things easy for Hannibal. "I do know how to fish," he said agreeably enough. "Now if you'll excuse me, I need to get to the lab so that I can work on doing my job."

"Will," and oh boy, did Hannibal actually sound exasperated? When did that ever happen?

"Yes, Hannibal?" Will asked in the most innocent voice he could manage, while he was actually cackling on the inside at making Hannibal be the one to squirm for once.

Hannibal sighed, and had a faint look of defeat on his face. "I greatly enjoy spending time with you, Will, however you made it quite clear that if I wanted to spend more time with you, it would have to be with a focus on your interests. You are interested in fishing, and I don't have that skill yet, so I want you to teach me how to fish."

It wasn't nearly as polite as the invitation to the opera had been, but it felt a lot more real, and that's why Will didn't immediately turn down the offer. That, and he really had promised that he would at least give Hannibal a chance. Miriam Lass was alive and home, and giving Hannibal a chance was the price he'd offered in exchange for that, so he couldn't just back down now.

And, as completely frustrating as it was to admit even to himself, Will found that sometimes, on rare occasion, hanging out with Hannibal could actually be quite fun. Not that he'd ever tell Hannibal such a thing. He'd lose all the progress he made if Hannibal thought that he could get away with not begging for every little scrap of time he got to spend with Will. There's no way he'd ever make this easy on Hannibal. And if he could possibly get something out of it as well, then there's no way he could miss out on that opportunity. "As fun as I'm sure it would be to teach the all mighty Hannibal about something he doesn't already know, I'm afraid that I'm going to be pretty busy with this case. Maybe after it's solved I'll have a little more free time."

Hannibal pressed his lips together in a flat line, clearly displeased, but unwilling to admit it. "I see," he said stiffly. "In that case, I offer my wishes that you are able to find the killer as quickly as possible."

"Thanks, Hannibal. Your support means so much with me." Then he did turn to get to his car, this time without being interrupted along the way. As soon as he was buckled up and driving away, Will couldn't stop himself from laughing out loud at the dejected look on Hannibal's face. Not that he generally revelled in seeing others in pain, but he was willing to make exceptions for certain smug jerks on occasion.

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As Will went about his normal business, he wasn't expecting to get a surprise visit from Alana Bloom. She had such a lovely smile, and Will was glad that these days he got to see that more often than the looks of pity and concern. Ever since Hannibal had brought Will

back to life and somehow cured him of his crazy, Will and Alana had been dancing closer and closer to each other.

They chatted for a bit, and then went on a long walk around Will's property just for the sake of spending time together. She admitted that she found Will attractive, and he couldn't help feeling pleased at the compliment. When they returned to his house, he poured them drinks, and they sat together for a few minutes before Alana suddenly leaned forward to give him a kiss.

Will honestly couldn't even remember the last time he'd kissed someone like this, but kissing Alana felt perfect, and if it weren't for the fact that they were only human and needed to breath, Will got the feeling that they would've kept their lips connected for another few hours. When they leaned away from each other, but stayed close enough that their noses were practically touching, Alana reached up to very gently run her fingers over the scar on Will's neck. "When did you get this? I don't remember that one."

And her innocent question about his scar immediately made Will think of Hannibal, since that was who gave it to him. It was like having a bucket of ice cold water dumped over his head, to be reminded of Hannibal now of all times. He liked Alana, he really did, and he also knew what Hannibal was capable of. For whatever reason, Hannibal had chosen Will to be the person he obsessed over, and Will didn't want to find out whether or not Hannibal was prone to jealousy. It had never come up before because Will didn't really interact with other humans often enough to date, or even to have one night stands.

Will didn't want to see Alana get hurt because of Hannibal's anger. Which really wasn't fair, since Will had never promised to 'save himself' for Hannibal, or anything like that. He was still very adamant about the fact that he had no plans to ever be Hannibal's consort now, or in the afterlife. Considering the fact that Hannibal sometimes seemed jealous of Will's dogs, he didn't want to risk Alana getting caught in between them. Hannibal had promised not to kill innocents, and Will would definitely consider Alana innocent, but as the incident with Miriam Lass had proven, Hannibal had no problem hurting innocents. And there were a lot of ways to hurt people that didn't involve killing them.

It really sucked to pull further away from Alana, since Will had had a crush on her since they'd first met, but he needed to protect her from Hannibal's potential wrath. "I'm sorry, Alana, but I don't think we should do this."

She furrowed her eyebrows, and a look of hurt crossed her face. "What are you talking about? Why not?"

"I'm too unstable, remember?"

Alana slowly shook her head. "That's what I used to think. But these past few months, you've seemed really well off. Healthy, and in your right mind."

Will wished that there were some way to handle this situation that would allow them to both walk away with their dignity, and to not stop being friends. Too bad he wasn't better at understanding social protocols, because that would probably help make all of this feel a little bit less awkward. "I'm really sorry, Alana. I just… I feel like we could be really good

together, but it wouldn't last forever, and someday it would end, and we'd lose each other entirely. I'd much rather have you as a lifelong friend than a lover with a time limit. Just look me in the eyes and try to tell me that you could see us lasting forever."

There was a short pause, and then Alana let out a soft huff before reaching up to rub her palms over her eyes for a moment. "Will Graham, closet romantic. Who would've thought? So you're going to hold out until you find The One? Is that it?"

Considering Hannibal wanted to keep Will by his side for basically all of eternity, that sounded about right. "Yeah, I guess I am." Trying to get with anyone else would only put them in the same position of being a potential target of Hannibal's anger, and Will wouldn't wish that on any innocent person. "I'm sorry, Alana."

She sighed, but then slowly stood up, peering down at Will. "It's okay. You're right; we wouldn't last very long. At least now I know the answer to the long awaited question of 'is Will Graham a good kisser?'"

Will stood as well, and arched one eyebrow. "Well? What's the answer?"

"I'm not telling you," Alana said with a light hearted voice. "I should probably be heading out now if I want to get home at any reasonable time. I'll see you soon though, Will, right?"

He nodded. "Definitely. Like I said, you're too good a friend to just give up on."

Alana gave him a small smile, and then walked out of the living room, leaving the house a moment later. He heard the sound of her car starting, and then stood where he was until he couldn't hear the engine any longer. Then he sank back down on the couch, and chugged down what was left of his drink, quickly followed by what was left of Alana's, and then he poured himself some more.

Will knew that in some strange alternate universe, one where he didn't know who Hannibal was, he probably would've rushed straight there to tell the psychiatrist all about what had happened. But there's no way he was going to endanger Alana by doing that. Instead, he was going to finish off the entire rest of the bottle in front of him, and then sleep for about a decade.

Later, he'd excuse it as stupid drunk rambling, but as he fell asleep, Will couldn't help wondering what it would feel like to kiss Hannibal instead.

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"Mr- Agent Graham! Are you Agent Graham?" Will furrowed his eyebrows and turned around to see who was calling for him. He blinked a few times when he didn't see anything immediately, and then realized that he had to direct his attention downwards to see a short, chubby man. He was well dressed, and well groomed, but seemed out of breath, and Will decided to be kind enough to backtrack towards the man instead of making the man come to him.

Once they were within a more appropriate distance, as in they wouldn't have to shout at each other to be heard, Will crossed his arms over his chest. "I'm sorry, but do I know you?"

The man shook his head sheepishly. "Not exactly. I'm Franklyn." He stuck out one hand, and Will politely shook it before crossing his arms again. Franklyn didn't seem to understand that Will wasn't in the mood for idle chatter, though. "I'm a patient of Dr. Lecter's. I was actually just about to head in there for my appointment today. One time I showed up early to an appointment, and I saw him sketching you, so I asked him who you were, and he said you're Agent Graham." He grinned proudly, like he'd just accomplished some trying task. Will wasn't surprised to hear that Hannibal had sketched him- though it was definitely a bit creepy- but he was surprised that Hannibal would offer up Will's name so freely.

He cleared his throat, wanting to get to the point of this conversation so that he could head inside and chew out Hannibal for being a dick. Not that anything in particular had happened lately, but Will felt like if he neglected to tell Hannibal off for too long, the man would let it go to his head. Well, and he really should've come by the office the other day when Hannibal had called him and said it was important, but Will had been feeling petulant at the time because of his preemptive breakup with Alana. "Is there a reason you wanted to talk to me, Franklyn?"

The portly man nodded, and a serious look covered his features entirely. "If you're an FBI agent, I'm sure you've heard about that guy who was murdered at the opera house?" Will nodded once, which seemed to excite the other man for some reason. "Well I know this is probably going to sound a little strange, but very recently my best friend told me that he wanted to cut someone's throat open and play them like a violin. You can understand why that's so concerning after hearing about the murder that happened. I confided in Dr. Lecter, since he's my psychiatrist, but I don't think he could talk to the police because of confidentiality laws, so I'm officially reporting my concern to you. If Dr. Lecter trusts you, then he must have good reason to."

Will felt his stomach clench up, and he berated himself for not going when Hannibal had called. In his defense, he had been upset, and he hadn't wanted it to seem like he could be treated like a dog that would always come running whenever Hannibal called. "What's your friend's name?"

"Tobias Budge. He owns a store called Chordophone String Shop. I can give you the address if you want to go talk to him."

Will sighed, then nodded. "Yes, I would greatly appreciate that, thanks." If this Tobias was really the killer, then Hannibal probably hadn't had any issue with killing the man himself. But if there was a chance he was still alive, it was Will's job to make sure he was arrested to face justice for his crime.

Because Will wasn't a complete moron, he made sure to pick up some backup before heading to the string shop. He wasn't quite sure what to expect when he got there. If Tobias was still alive, why would Hannibal have allowed that? Had he changed his mind about wanting Tobias as a partner? If that was the case had he changed his mind about wanting Will? Ugh, there was no point in thinking about all that at the moment.

The door to the shop was unlocked, probably because it was in the middle of the day, and he walked in cautiously with two uniformed police officers following right behind him. None of them had their weapons drawn, but Will had explained as much of the situation as he could, and all three of them were a little on edge.

"Mr. Budge?" There was no one at the front counter, and Will nodded for the officers to do a quick sweep of the shop, which apparently had multiple rooms making it up.

As he looked around, one hand on his holster, he heard a slightly movement, and whirled around. Sitting on the piano bench, but facing away from the piano, was an attractive dark-skinned man who was looking up at Will with narrowed eyes. "Is there something I can help you with?"

"Are you Mr. Budge?" When the man nodded, Will took a hesitant step forward. "I'm Agent Will Graham. I'm here to talk to you about Douglas Wilson. Do you mind answering a few questions?"

Tobias arched one eyebrow. "Graham, huh? Why do I recognize that name?" There was a pause, as if he was actually waiting for Will to answer, but when Will remained silent, the man shrugged. "Ah yes, Will Graham. Franklyn hasn't shut up about you since the day Lecter let your name slip." Will knew that there was absolutely no way Hannibal had ever given away even a single bit of information that he didn't want to share. "I think Franklyn might be in love with Lecter with how much he talks about him. And at first, he seemed disappointed that Lecter was sketching some man he didn't even know. But now I'm thinking that perhaps Franklyn managed to move his crush towards you instead, despite the fact that he's never met you. Or maybe he's more enamored with the idea of you and Lecter together." He gave Will a long, assessing look before shrugging. "I don't know that I can blame him. You do make a very attractive couple."

Will cleared his throat, and tried to get the conversation back on track. "Will you answer a few questions about Douglas Wilson?"

Tobias slowly stood up, and even though Will didn't have any solid proof against the man, he couldn't help tightening his grip on his gun. But he didn't want to draw it without knowing for sure, because it would be awful of him to point his gun at an innocent civilian. "I don't think that there's much to talk about in that regard, Mr. Graham."

Will frowned. "Mr. Budge-" Before he could even pull his gun out, Tobias was rushing towards him. Will yanked his gun out and managed to fire off one shot, though it only went through Tobias' ear. A moment later, he was being tackled to the ground. And clearly Tobias was in good shape, and had no problem pinning Will down. He knocked Will's gun out of his hand, and then put it on the ground to shove it across the room, all while Will struggled to get free.

"I doubt there's much point in answering any of your questions. Surely you wouldn't be here if you didn't already think that I'm the killer." A few droplets of Tobias' blood fell onto Will's cheek.

Will grit his teeth. "So was that your confession?"

Tobias snorted, sounding weirdly amused. “Not that it’s going to do you much good at all.” Will continued to flail and fight against Tobias, wondering where the hell his backup was. Then Tobias managed to flip Will onto his stomach, and suddenly it felt like a razor wire was being wrapped around Will’s neck. He reached up to try to tug it away, but it just kept getting tighter. It felt like Will couldn’t breath, and he didn’t know why these stupid killers always seemed to go right for his neck, and he couldn’t help thinking that at least he wouldn’t have to be Hannibal’s stupid consort, and-

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Will wasn’t all that surprised to wake up in his river. He let out a sigh of resignation, and then walked up onto dry land. Not that it mattered much, since the water didn’t actually make him wet anywhere. He looked around curiously, and saw that everything was exactly the same as the first two times he’d been here. The only difference was a strange, almost translucent, effect on certain things around him. Was it even worth it to head towards the house? He wasn’t sure. Maybe he’d wait a little bit, and reflect on all the mistakes he’d made in life.

Will sat down on the ground, and then laid back to stare up at the sky. He must not have paid it much attention before, because the strangeness of it definitely would’ve stuck out in his memory. It was a dark purple, filled with glowing stars, and yet everywhere around Will was lit up like it was daytime, which is what made it so odd. It was a nice sight, though. Being able to just lie there and stargaze seemed pretty relaxing.

He wasn’t sure how much time passed before he heard the slight rustle of grass, and then he could feel the warmth of someone next to him. He didn’t even have to turn his head to the side to know that it was Hannibal. “I’ve been thinking,” he said softly. “Maybe my dying is just inevitable. You already gave me two more chances than most people ever get, and yet, here we are.”

“Here we are,” Hannibal repeated. “I should’ve known that you wouldn’t be able to keep yourself out of trouble. You know I almost couldn’t believe it when Tobias showed up at my office, covered in blood. He said he’d killed three police officers, and I of course, killed him. I know you’re too clever for your own good sometimes, but I have to know how on Earth you knew to look in that shop for your killer.”

Will sighed. “A patient of yours- Franklyn. Said he was concerned about a friend. Did you know it was him, Hannibal?”

There was a pause as Hannibal carefully thought through his words, just like always, and then he spoke. “Not at first. But Franklyn told me of his concerns, and that’s when I knew. I invited Tobias to a dinner at my home, and I was prepared to kill him. But then I knew I wouldn’t be able to stand your disappointment at me killing someone you hadn’t chosen for me, so I let him go under the assumption I would partner with him. I called you immediately to let you know what happened, but you wouldn’t answer your phone.” His voice didn’t sound too accusing, but Will knew that there was an accusation in there.

Will sighed again, feeling tired. He didn’t want to lie to Hannibal, though. That was a lot different than just keeping something from him. “Alana came to visit me the night you called. We spent some time together, and then- then she kissed me.”

“Really.” Hannibal’s voice sounded eerily blank, and Will wanted to make sure Hannibal understood everything that had happened.

He propped himself up on one arm so that he was looking down at Hannibal earnestly. “I kissed her back at first, but then I pushed her away. We parted ways as friends, and nothing more.”

Hannibal arched one eyebrow, and sat up, looking just like he had during one of their appointments back before Will had known the truth about everything. “And why did you push her away?” he asked in that annoyingly clinical voice of his.

“I didn’t want you to hurt her.”

And Hannibal dared to look slightly offended by the accusation. “Will, do you really think I would be so petty?”

Will gave Hannibal a frustrated look. “We both know you’ve hurt plenty of people for far less.”

There was a gleam in Hannibal’s eyes as he responded. “And what crime do you think Alana committed to deserve my petty retribution?”

That was definitely a trick question, no doubt about it. The only problem was that Will wasn’t quite sure what the right answer was. Telling the truth would be admitting that he cared about what Hannibal thought of him, or worse, it would give Hannibal the idea that Will was seriously considering becoming his consort, or whatever. But lying was sure to end badly, considering who exactly it was that he was talking to at the moment. Will flopped back down onto his back, looking up at the odd nighttime sky. “God, Hannibal, why can’t anything ever just be easy with you?” When there was no response, he squeezed his eyes shut before answering the trick question. “I thought you would be jealous of me being with Alana romantically. But perhaps I was wrong, and you’re actually just a reasonable guy, and I can wait around here until Alana eventually dies, of completely natural causes, and we can-”

“Absolutely not,” Hannibal interrupted in a low growl. He quickly moved so that he was leaning over Will, pinning him to the ground. Though there was a strange absence of the sense of danger that had been there when Will had been in a nearly identical position with Tobias so recently. “You are mine, Will, and both of us already know it. Why bother even trying to deny it?”

Will shrugged, which was about as much movement as he was granted with the way Hannibal was pressed up against him. “You don’t own me, Hannibal. I died without breaking any part of our deal, which means that I’m not your consort.”

There was a long pause, and then Hannibal suddenly got to his feet, pulling Will up with him, which left Will with a slightly dizzy feeling. “You are right about that. But the terms of our deal last until you are dead, and you, darling boy, are not dead.”

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“-sorry, Will. I know that I made a promise to Alana that I would keep you safe, but I wasn’t able to keep that promise, and now-”

Will opened his eyes, and turned his head to see Jack sitting in the chair next to his bed. “Hey,” he croaked in a painfully hoarse voice.

Jack’s eyes widened in surprise. “Will? Am I dreaming right now? Because I know I wasn’t crazy when those doctors said that you lost too much blood.”

Jack leaned forward, and was so clearly filled with a lot of concern for Will. Will wondered why everything hurt so much. There hadn’t been anything more than painless scars left as reminders of the first couple of times he’d died, so why would this be any different? Unless it’s because he’d already been found by the time Hannibal brought him back, and Hannibal was smart enough to know that someone would find it odd if Will was able to miraculously make a complete recovery within a small amount of time. Then again, Hannibal had said he wasn’t dead. “How long was I out?” he rasped.

“Three days,” Jack said quietly. “I thought you were…” he trailed off, not needing to finish the statement for them to both know exactly what he meant. Jack sighed, and Will realized that the man looked unbearably tired. “I know you should probably be taking it easy right now,”

Will shook his head, then winced as the movement brought several waves of pain with it. “Just tell me what happened. Please.”

Jack sighed again, but then nodded, and leaned back in his chair. “Hannibal called the police because he’d killed Tobias Budge in an act of self defense after Budge killed the patient Hannibal was seeing at the time, and attacked Hannibal himself. When I realized that that was the same person you’d been tipped off to investigate, and that I hadn’t heard from you or the officers you brought with you, I took a couple agents to Budge’s shop. Both officers were already dead, and you lost so much blood that I thought you were too. But you’re one tough son of a bitch. Too stubborn to die, huh?”

“Something like that,” Will muttered. He wondered if Budge had really killed Franklyn, or if Hannibal had done it himself. Then he decided that it didn’t really matter either way. “Is Hannibal okay?” It was a stupid question, because he was pretty sure that a simple human like Tobias Budge wasn’t capable of hurting a creature like Hannibal, but he couldn’t help being wor- a little concerned- anyways.

Jack snorted. “Figures that the first thing you’d ask about after nearly dying is whether Hannibal’s okay. The two of you really have become quite good friends, haven’t you?” There wasn’t quite an accusation in Jack’s voice, but a mild curiosity perhaps. When Will didn’t respond, Jack just offered a light shrug. “He’s fine. A few scrapes and bruises, and a little traumatized, but he’ll be alright. Want me to call him and let him know you woke up? I’ll have to let the others at the BSU know anyways. We were all really worried about you, Will. Don’t you dare scare me like that again.”

“I’ll do my best not to,” Will promised wryly. “And you don’t have to call Hannibal. He always seems to know what’s going on anyways. And you can leave the room, Jack. I

promise that I won't drop dead while you're not looking."

Jack grumbled his annoyance, but it was obvious how relieved he was to see Will awake and as well as could be expected given the situation. "I'd offer to grab you some crappy hospital coffee, but I'm sure you plan on staying away from anything acidic for a long time."

Will nodded. "That's probably a good idea." Once Jack left the room, Will reached up to very gently press against the swathe of bandages wrapped around his neck. He squeezed his eyes shut at the pain that rose up in him. "Stupid Hannibal." Because this was definitely all Hannibal's fault. Even if he couldn't figure out how at the moment, he was sure he'd think of a way to lay all the blame for this solely on Hannibal's lap.

Whether it was because of whatever medicine was being pumped into him through the needles in his arm, or because he was just really exhausted, Will ended up dozing off for a little while. Though he wasn't even aware he'd fallen asleep until he heard Hannibal's familiar voice coming from nearby. "It's almost as though you were created for the sole purpose of constantly surprising me. I don't know of anyone else capable of such a thing." He sounded weirdly fond.

Will blearily opened his eyes to see that Hannibal was standing close to the bed, and there were a few small bandages visible on his face and hands. "Oh, so you mean you didn't think Tobias was going to almost kill me?"

"Certainly not. I had not planned on you ever confronting him at all. At least, not without me by your side." He took a step closer to the bed. "I am glad to see you are awake. It was a very precarious situation at first. I'm sure you've already figured out that I could not heal you much because you were already being treated at the hospital by the time I was finished with Tobias."

Will shrugged. "It's fine. What's another scar between friends?"

Hannibal tilted his head. "So then you admit that we are friends?"

Will groaned. "God no. I'm not that crazy. You're the crazy one. Still can't figure out what someone like you would see in someone like me."

"Oh? And what do you mean by 'someone like me'?" Hannibal couldn't keep the amusement out of his voice, the smug bastard.

"Attractive, successful, has magic powers, could have literally anyone else. Take your pick."

Hannibal chuckled. "I believe that they've given you pain medication, dear Will. Though I am pleased to hear that you think so highly of me. Why don't we return to this conversation when you are no longer drugged? I would prefer for it to be a memorable moment for both of us. When you finally admit that you are mine."

Will scoffed. "That won't happen," he mumbled. "Ugh, I haven't even had sex in such a long time."

“My, what a dirty mind you have, Will. Who said anything about sex? I assure you that I can introduce you to far greater ecstasies.” He leaned over to brush a sweaty strand of hair away from where it was clinging to Will’s cheek. “You really are perfect for me.” Then he leaned over to press a very brief kiss to Will’s forehead before pulling away and taking a couple of steps in the direction of the door. “You know where to find me when you’re ready.”

Will furrowed his eyebrows. “I thought you were the one always coming to me, no matter how annoying it gets, because you like to be in charge of everything? And you’re a pushy bastard.”

Hannibal grinned, and even though it was a grin that signalled danger to anyone in their right mind, Will couldn’t help feeling a different sort of shiver run down his spine. “Oh don’t worry, I haven’t given up on you, darling Will. I doubt I ever could. But it will be nice to have you running to me for once. In fact, I am quite looking forward to it.” With that, he left the room, and Will was left alone with his hazy thoughts and the gentle beeping of the machines that were connected to him. Hannibal was crazy for sure, but bringing Will back to life three times over, or at least two and a half times, had to mean that he genuinely cared about Will. It was a mystery as to why, but maybe Will had been looking at this situation all wrong the entire time.

The devil himself wanted Will, for whatever reason, and Will just kept pushing him away, or letting him in with great reluctance. But maybe there were more benefits to the situation than he’d thought. If he let Hannibal think that he was interested in him after all, he’d be able to use Hannibal’s power for himself, in a way. He could throw himself recklessly into any case, knowing that Hannibal would save him. He could get help taking down people who deserved to be brought down. He could do any number of things with Hannibal backing him. And all it would take is a little bit of acting. Probably not even as much as he’d like to think. Will would let Hannibal think he was getting what he wanted, and in exchange, Will could get what he wanted. Certainly sounded like an easy enough plan. And it’s not like anything had ever gone wrong before where Hannibal was concerned, right?

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